

or goostly, or noon; if any of thy kynrede have synned with hire or noon, and manye mo thynges. Another circumstance is this; whether it be doon in fornicacioun, or in avowtrie, or noon; incest, or noon; mayden, or noon; in manere of homicide, or noon; horrible grete synnes or smale; & how longe thou hast continued in synne. The thridde circumstance is the place ther thou hast do synne; whether in oother mennes hous or in thyne owene; in feeld or in chyrche, or in chyrchehawe; in chyrche dedicaat, or noon. for if the chyrche be halwed, and man or womman spille his kynde inwith that place by wey of synne, or by wikked temptacioun, the chyrche is entreddited til it be reconciled by the bysshop; and the preest that dide swich a vileynye, to terme of al his lif, he sholde namoore synge masse; & if he dide, he sholde doon deedly synne at every time that he so songe masse. The fourthe circumstance is, by whiche mediators or by whiche messengers, as for enticement, or for consentement to bere compaignye with felaweshipe; for many a wrecche, for to bere compaignye, wil go to the devel of helle. Wherfore they that eggen or consenten to the synne been parteners of the synne, & of the dampnacioun of the synner. The fiftthe circumstance is, how manye tymes that he hath synned, if it be in his mynde, and how ofte that he hath falle. for he that ofte falleth in synne, he despiseth the mercy of God, and encreaseth his synne, & is unkynde to Crist; and he wexeth the moore sieble to withstande synne, and synneth the moore lightly, and the latter ariseth, and is the moore eschew for to shryven hym, namely, to hym that is his confessour. for which that folk, whan they falle agayn in hir olde folies, outhen they forleten hir olde confessours al outrely, or elles they departen hir shrift in diverse places; but soothly, swich departed shrift deserveth no mercy of God of his synnes. The sixte circumstance is, why that a man synneth, as by temptacioun; & if hymself procure thilke temptacioun, or by the excitynge of oother folke; or if he synne with a womman by force, or by hire owene assent; or if the womman, maugree hir hed, hath been afforced, or noon; this shal she telle; for covetise, or for povertie, and if it was hire procuringe or noon; & swiche manere harneys. The sevenethe circumstance is, in what manere he hath doon his synne, or how that she hath suffred that folk han doon to hire. And the same shal the man telle pleyntly, with alle circumstaunces; and whether he hath synned with comune bordel-wommen, or noon; or doon his synne in hooly tymes, or noon; in fastynges, or noon; or bifrom his shrifte, or after his latter shrifte;

and hath, peraventure, broken therefore his penance enjoyned; by whos help and whos conseil; by sorcerie or craft; al mooste toold. Alle thise thynges, after that they been grete or smale, engreggen the conscience of man. And eek the preest that is thyngement in yevyng of thy penance, & that is after thy contricioun, for understoode wel, that after tyme that a man hath defouled his baptesme by synne, if he wole come to salvacioun, ther is noon other wey but by penitence & shrifte and satisfaccioun; and namely by the two, if ther be a confessour to which he may shryven hym; and the thridde, if he have lyf to parfoumen it.

THANNE shal man looke and considere, that if he wole maken a trewe and a profitable confessioun, ther mooste be fourte condicions. first, it mooste been in sorweful bitternesse of herte, as seyde the kyng Ezechias to God: I wol remembre me alle the yeris of my lif in bitternesse of myn herte. This condicion of bitternesse hath fyve signes. The firste is, that confessioun mooste be shamefast, nat for to covere ne hyden his synne, for he hath agilt his God & defouled his soule. And therof seith Seint Augustyn: The herte travailleth for shame of his synne; and for he hath greet shamefastnesse, he is digne to have greet mercy of God. Swich was the confessioun of the publican, that wolde nat heven up his eyen to hevene, for he hadde offended God of hevenc; for which shamefastnesse he hadde anon the mercy of God. And therof seith Seint Augustyn, that swich shamefast folk been next foryevnesse and remissoun. Another signe is humylitee in confessioun; of which seith Seint Peter: Humbleth you under the myght of God. The hond of God is myghty in confessioun, for therby God foryeveth thee thy synnes; for he allone hath the power. And this humylitee shal been in herte, and in signe outward; for right as he hath humylitee to God in his herte, right so sholde he humble his body outward to the preest that sit in Goddes place, for which in no manere, sith that Crist is sovereyn and the preest meene and mediator bitwixe Crist and the synner, and the synner is the laste by wey of resoun, thanne sholde nat the synner sitte as heighe as his confessour, but knele bifrom hym or at his feet, but if maladie destourbe it. for he shal nat taken kepe who sit there, but in whos place that he sitteth. A man that hath trespassed to a lord, and comth for to axe mercy and maken his accord, and set him down anon by the lord, men wolde holden hym outrageous, and nat worthy so soone for to have remissoun ne mercy. The thridde signe is

how that thy shrift sholde be ful of teeris, if man may; and if man may nat wepe with his bodily eyen, lat hym wepe in herte. Swich was the confessioun of Seint Peter; for after that he hadde forsake Jhesu Crist, he wente out and weep ful bitterly. The fourthe signe is, that he ne lette nat for shame to shewen his confessioun. Swich was the confessioun of the Magdelene, that ne spared for no shame of hem that weren atte feeste, for to go to oure Lord Jhesu Crist & biknowe to hym hire synnes. The fiftthe signe is, that a man or a womman be obeisant to receyven the penance that hym is enjoyned for his synnes; for certes, Jhesu Crist, for the gyltes of a man, was obedient to the deeth.

THE seconde condicion of verray confessioun is, that it be hastily doon; for certes, if a man hadde a deedly wounde, evere the longer that he taried to warishe hymself, the moore wolde it corrupte and haste hym to his deeth; and eek the wounde wolde be the wors for to heele. And right so fareth synne, that longe tyme is in a man unshewen his synnes for manye causes; as for drede of deeth, that cometh ofte sodenly, & is in no certeyn what tyme it shal be, ne in what place; & eek the drechynge of synne draweth in another; and eek the longer that he tarieth, the ferther he is fro Crist. And if he abide to his laste day, scarcely may he shryven hym, or remembre hym of his synnes, or repenten hym, for the grevous maladie of his deeth. And forasmuche as he ne hath nat in his lyf herked Jhesu Crist, whanne he hath spoken, he shal crie to Jhesu Crist at his laste day, and scarcely wol he herkne hym. And understond that this condicion mooste han fourte thynges. Thi shrift mooste be purveyed bifore and avysed; for wikked haste dooth no profit; and that a man konne shryve hym of his synnes, be it of pride, or of envye, and so forth of the speces and circumstances; & that he have comprehended in his mynde the nombre and the greetnesse of his synnes, and how longe that he hath leyn in synne; & eek that he be contrit of his synnes, and in stidefast purpos, by the grace of God, nevere eft to falle in synne; and eek that he drede & cowntrewaite hymself, that he fle the occasiouns of synne to whiche he is enclyned.

ALSO thou shalt shryve thee of alle thy synnes to oman, and nat a parcel to oman and a parcel to another; that is to understonde, in entente to departe thy confessioun as for shame or drede; for it nys but stranglyng of thy soule. for certes, Jhesu Crist is entierly al good; in hym nys noon inperfeccioun; and therefore

outhen he foryeveth al parfitly, or never a deel. I seye nat that if thou be assigned to the penitauncer for certein synne, that thou art bounde to shewen hym al the remenaunt of the synnes, of which thou hast be shryven to thy curaate, but if it like to thee of thy humylitee; this is no departyng of shrifte. Ne I seye nat, theras I speke of divisioun of confessioun, that if thou have licence for to shryve thee to a discreet and an honeste preest, where thee liketh, and by licence of thy curaate, that thou nemayst wel shryve thee to him of alle thy synnes. But lat no blotte be bihynde; lat no synne been untoold, as fer as thou hast remembrance. And whan thou shalt be shryven to thy curaate, telle hym eek alle the synnes that thou hast doon syn thou were last yshryven; this is no wikked entente of divisioun of shrifte.

ALSO, the verray shrifte axeth certein condicions. first, that thou shryve thee by thy free wil, noght constreyned, ne for shame of folk, ne for maladie, ne swiche thynges; for it is rescoun that he that trespasseth by his free wyl, that by his free wyl he confesse his trespas; and that noon oother man telle his synne but he hymself; ne he shal nat nayte ne denye his synne, ne wratthe hym agayn the preest for his amonestyng to leve synne.

THE seconde condicion is, that thy shrift be laweful; that is to seyn, that thou that shryvest thee, and eek the preest that hereth thy confessioun, been verrailly in the feith of hooly chyrche; and that a man ne be nat despeired of the mercy of Jhesu Crist, as Caym or Judas. And eek a man moot accusen hymself of his owene trespas, and nat another; but he shal blame and wyten hymself & his owene malice of his synne, and noon oother; but nathelees, if that another man be occasioun or enticere of his synne, or the estaat of a persone be swich thurgh which his synne is agregged, or elles that he may nat pleyntly shryven hym but he telle the persone with which he hath synned; thanne may he telle; so that his entente ne be nat to bakbite the persone, but oonly to declaren his confessioun. Thou ne shalt nat eek make no lesynges in thy confessioun; for humylitee, peraventure, to seyn that thou hast doon synnes of whiche that thou were nevere gilty. for Seint Augustyn seith: If thou, bycause of thy humylitee makest lesynges on thyself, though thou ne were nat in synne bifrom, yet artow thanne in synne thurgh thy lesynges. Thou most eek shewe thy synne by thyne owene propre mouth, but thou be woxe downb, and nat by no lettre; for thou that hast doon the synne, thou shalt have the